CLAIMS

We claim:

1.   A method in a computing system for displaying ordering information about items ordered from a web merchant, comprising:

for each of a plurality of time periods,

determining a sales ranking, in which a rank value is attributed to at least a subset of items that may be ordered from the web merchant, each rank value reflecting the number of orders placed for the corresponding item during the current time period, a smaller rank value reflecting a larger number of orders than a larger rank value;

selecting items having a current rank value that is less than a rank value threshold and for which less than a threshold number of orders were placed during the current time period;

for each selected item:

identifying among the rank values of the selected item for a predetermined number of time periods immediately preceding the current time period the largest rank value;

determining a score for the selected item based upon the current rank value of the selected item and the identified rank value of the selected item, the score characterizing the increase in sales ranking undergone by the selected item; and

generating a display showing, for at least a portion of the selected items, an indication of the score determined for the selected item.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein the score determined for each selected item is the difference between the identified rank value of the selected item

3   and the current rank value of the selected item, all divided by the identified rank

4   value of the selected item.

1   3.   The method of claim 1 wherein the score determined for each

2   selected item is the difference between the identified rank value of the selected item

3   and the current rank value of the selected item, all divided by the current rank value

4   of the selected item.

1   4.   The method of claim 1, further comprising repeating the method

2   for each of a plurality of item categories.

1   5.   The method of claim 1 wherein each item is a product available

2   for purchase from the web merchant.

1   6.   The method of claim 1 wherein all of the time periods have

2   substantially equal length.

1   7.   The method of claim 1 wherein the items are displayed in the

2   order of their scores.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting the

2   generated display to a visitor to a web site operated by the web merchant.

1   9.   A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing

2   system to display ordering information about items ordered from a web merchant by:

3   determining a sales ranking, in which a rank value is attributed to at

4   least a subset of items that may be ordered from the web merchant, each rank value

5   reflecting the number of orders placed for the corresponding item during the current

6   time period, a smaller rank value reflecting a larger number of orders than a larger

7   rank value;

8   selecting items having a current rank value that is less than a rank value

9   threshold and for which less than a threshold number of orders were placed during

10   the current time period;

11   for each selected item:

12   identifying among rank values of the selected item for a

13   predetermined number of time periods immediately preceding the current time period

14   the largest rank value;

15   determining a score for the selected item based upon the current

16   rank value of the selected item and the identified rank value of the selected item, the

17   score characterizing the increase in sales ranking undergone by the selected item; and

18   generating a display showing, for at least a portion of the selected

19   items, an indication of the score determined for the selected item.

1   10.   A method in a computing system for displaying consumption

2   information about items, comprising:

3   from a current consumption rank for each of a plurality of items and

4   one or more previous consumption ranks for each of the plurality of items, attributing

5   to at least a portion of the plurality of items a score characterizing the magnitude of

6   increase in the consumption rank of the item; and

7   generating a display incorporating at least a portion of the attributed

8   scores and the corresponding items.

1   11.   The method of claim 10 wherein each consumption rank reflects

2   the number of orders placed for the corresponding item in a particular time period as

3   compared to the number of orders placed for other items.

1   12.   The method of claim 10 wherein each consumption rank reflects

2   the number of sales of the corresponding item in a particular time period as compared

3   to the number of sales of other items.

1   13.   The method of claim 10, further comprising generating the

2   consumption ranks used to attribute scores to items.

1   14.   The method of claim 10, further comprising retrieving the

2   consumption ranks used to attribute scores to items.

1   15.   The method of claim 10 wherein each attributed score further

2   reflects a consumption rank reached by the item.

1   16.   A computing system for displaying consumption information

2   about items, comprising:

3   a scoring subsystem that, from a current consumption rank for each of a

4   plurality of items and one or more previous consumption ranks for each of the

5   plurality of items, attributes to at least a portion of the plurality of items a score

6   characterizing the magnitude of increase in the consumption rank of the item; and

7   a display generation subsystem that generates a display incorporating

8   indications of at least a portion of the attributed scores, together with indications of

9   the corresponding items.

1   17.   One or more generated data signals collectively conveying a

2   display document, the display document comprising:

3   a list of items available via a sales channel, each item in the list

4   accompanied by a quantitative indication of growth in sales rate undergone by the

5   item.

1   18.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the display document is a

2   web page.

1   19.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the display document is an
2 HTML document.

1   20.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the display document is an
2 XML document.

1   21.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the display document is an
2 electronic mail message.

1   22.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the items in the list are a
2 proper subset of all items available via the sales channel.

1   23.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the sales channel is a group
2 of merchants.

1   24.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the sales channel is a single
2 merchant.

1   25.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein the sales channel is a web
2 merchant.

1   26.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication
2 is based upon a comparison of a sales rank during a recent period to an earlier sales
3 rank.

1   27.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication
2 is based upon the difference between a sales rank during a recent period and an
3 earlier sales rank.

1   28.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   has a positive correlation with the difference between a sales rank during a recent

3   period and an earlier sales rank.

1   29.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   has a negative correlation with a sales rank during a recent period.

1   30.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   has a negative geometric correlation with a sales rank during a recent period.

1   31.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   has a negative correlation with a sales rank during the most recent period.

1   32.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   has a negative geometric correlation with a sales rank during the most recent period.

1   33.   The data signals of claim 17 wherein each quantitative indication

2   is the value of the expression $(B - A) / A$, where A is a sales rank during a first

3   period for an item and B is a sales rank during a second period for the item.

1   34.   The data signals of claim 33 wherein the first period is a

2   recently-concluded hour.

1   35.   The data signals of claim 34 wherein the second period is an

2   hour in a range of hours preceding the first period.

1   36.   The data signals of claim 35 wherein the range of hours

2   preceding the first period is the 23 hours preceding the first period.

1   37.   The data signals of claim 34 wherein the second period is an
2   hour in a range of hours preceding the first period in which the item has the highest
3   rank.

1   38.   One or more computer memories collectively storing a
2   consumption rate acceleration data structure, comprising a plurality of entries, each
3   entry including:
4   an identifier identifying an item, the item having a consumption rate
5   that varies over time; and
6   a value indicating a level of acceleration of the consumption rate of the
7   item.